



# WEEK 14

## FRIDAY 4 APR 2014

### THIS WEEK

- New York introduces online poker legislation
- Guest column: Alex Kornilov on bet stimulation
- US politicians launch anti-online gaming bill
- Tweets of the week



#### TOP STORY

## RUSSIA 'PLAN CRIMEA GAMBLING'

Peninsula would become a special gaming area



Russia is considering adding Crimea to its existing gambling zones

Russia is considering turning the disputed territory of Crimea into a gambling zone, according to insiders. Four people with direct knowledge of the plans revealed to Bloomberg that Russian officials discussed the proposal at a 21 March meeting led by deputy prime minister Dmitry Kozak. The country's ministries of economy, finance and regional development have apparently been handed a 15 April deadline to present a plan for the project, which would include casinos and hotels.

It is suggested that a Crimea gambling area would be created as part of a special economic zone which would give tax breaks to firms located within it. The respective spokespeople of Kozak and prime minister Dmitry Medvedev declined to comment on the issue.

On 18 March Russian president Vladimir Putin and the leaders of Crimea signed a bill to absorb the peninsula into Russia from Ukraine, a move not recognised by the international community.

Gambling has been illegal in Russia since 2009, aside from in  
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four designated regions: Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, Altai and Vladivostok. The only resort currently in operation is Azov City in Krasnodar, although construction is under way elsewhere.

Russia is looking to make Crimea less financially reliant on the state as they prepare to cover the region's 2014 fiscal deficit of up to 55bn rubles (\$1.5bn).

However Pyotr Kuznetsov, a pioneer of gambling in Ukraine, told *Forbes* that he saw "no prospect of creating effective gambling in the Crimea". He said that not only does the region lack the necessary infrastructure but it is "unrealistic" to think that it can attract the required volume of investment.

He added that the territory's current gambling facilities, which consist of casinos in major cities and coastal gambling machines, were mainly used by holidaying Ukrainians who were unlikely to visit now the area has been claimed as part of Russia, while it is cheaper for citizens of Moscow and Kiev to fly to casinos in Croatia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

**KEY POINTS**

- Russia said to be considering turning Crimea into a gambling zone
- Project would reportedly involve casinos and hotels
- Gambling is currently only allowed in four designated regions



pari-mutuel wagering and breeding law, and penal law, to allow certain internet poker variants.

The legislation would authorise 10 online poker licences for 10 years, at a fee of \$10m and a tax rate of 15% on gross gaming revenue. Those involved in taking online wagers in the US after 2006 appear to be blocked from entering the market.

The bill, which has no companion legislation in the State Assembly, is now with the Senate Committee on Racing, Gaming and Wagering of which Senator Bonacic [pictured above] is chair.

Bonacic said that he didn't expect the legislation to pass this year, adding that he first wants to understand how four upcoming land-based casinos will change the state's gambling market.

The New York Gaming Facility Location Board this week officially requested applications for the four upstate casino licences set for creation following an earlier approval of a state constitutional amendment by local voters. The quartet of venues will be spread across the Catskills, Capital Region and Southern Tier regions, with licences costing up to \$70m on a sliding scale.

**KEY POINTS**

- New York online poker bill introduced
- Legalisation would allow 10 licensees to offer select variants

**USA**

**ANTI-ONLINE GAMING BILL LAUNCHED**  
**Legislation would restore original interpretation of Wire Act**

Federal legislation banning online gaming in the US has been introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham [pictured below] and Congressman Jason Chaffetz. Released as identical bills in both the Senate and the House, the Restoration of America's Wire Act would make internet gambling illegal by reinstating the Wire Act to the position it occupied prior to its reinterpretation by the Department of Justice (DoJ), who in December 2011 determined that it only applied to sports betting.

Chaffetz said: "The DoJ opened the door for massive change in policy without significant public input. These fundamental changes need to go through Congress."

**KEY POINTS**

- Federal legislation which would ban online gaming by restoring the Wire Act has been introduced



**Tweets of the week**

**"The number of crimes committed by Macau casino dealers last year rose by 85 percent compared to 2012."**  
*Macau gaming law expert Luis Mesquita deMelo* [[@LuisMdeMelo](#)]

**"Customer care creates revenues, NOT costs!"**  
*Social CRM strategist*  
[@JoakimNilsson](#)

**"These arrogant golfers who think we've got nothing better to do than watch them taking a zillion practice swings need chucking out."**  
*Racing Post editor*  
[@BruceMillington](#)

## GUEST COLUMNIST

**"THE WORLD CUP, SOCIAL MEDIA AND BET STIMULATION"**


by **Alex Kornilov**  
sports prediction  
firm CEO

"The World Cup in Brazil will be the biggest betting event of all time. With kick-off times that are attractive to a European audience and, with all the major footballing countries qualifying, worldwide interest will be unprecedented.

Football is the globe's most popular sport and 2.8 billion viewers are expected to tune in. British bookmakers are predicting England's involvement alone will boost turnover by an extra £150m.

It will also be the most competitive betting event ever, with companies fighting for their slice of the action. Big-name ambassadors and headline promotions certainly raise an operator's profile, but all bookmakers can encourage punters to have a bet by simply making more information available to them.

Most casual bettors will have favourite teams and players and their wagering to an extent is influenced by this. Fans will often have a patriotic punt on their team, perhaps more out of hope and loyalty than expectation.

But getting someone to bet on a lower-profile game or one between teams that they are not familiar with can be a challenge. Does anyone really

have a strong view on Iran versus Bosnia-Herzegovina? By working with highly verifiable sports prediction services based on statistical data, such as my firm Betegy, operators can break down games and present easy-to-understand snippets which will lead people to have a bet.

Most punters don't have access to the vast database of stats available to odds compilers and other analytical providers and often have to make educated guesses regarding likely team line-ups.

Up-to-the-minute analysis offsets that to a degree and, by giving predictions in simple percentage terms, many betting and statistical tools can show bettors where they have an edge. For example, a Betegy calculation might show that Italy have a 60% chance of winning a particular match. If Italy are available at 2.0 with a bookmaker (50% chance of winning) bettors will be encouraged to bet at that price as findings demonstrate they should be closer to 1.6 to win.

Social media is a huge part of sport. The number of viewers 'multi-screening' – watching something on television while simultaneously talking about the events on social networks like Twitter and Facebook – continues to grow exponentially.

During the 2013 Champions League final Twitter users sent 117,000 tweets per minute and a total of almost 4.8 million thematic messages. A look at the UK's top 10 trending events of 2013 underlines what a sport-loving nation it is – seven of the top 10 were football matches.

It's key that bookmakers have a strong social media strategy.

We have seen the larger operators enjoy great success by injecting a brand of humour into their tweets with funny photos and jokes. They can expect hundreds of retweets and consequently boast followings in the hundreds of thousands.

If bookmakers have access to interesting statistical analysis and incorporate that into their social media strategy they can gain an edge on their rivals. Let's imagine England are 1-0 down to Uruguay and stats show that the Three Lions actually have a fantastic record of coming from behind and winning games. That information could persuade bettors to have a bet and to share that stat. That is a really powerful weapon in any firm's armoury ahead of what promises to be four of the biggest betting weeks of the year."

*Alex Kornilov is the CEO of Betegy, which offers highly verifiable sports predictions generated by a self-learning algorithm based on statistical data, for individual and corporate clients. Betegy has recently launched a sophisticated online and mobile prediction tool that accurately forecasts outcomes of matches and a range of betting markets and provides instant responses via Twitter. Users simply tweet @askbetegy the name of the teams playing, eg Manchester United Bayern Munich, to receive their bespoke forecast, together with information on its probability*

**Want to be a guest columnist in GI Friday? Write to: editor@gamblinginsider.com**

**OUT NOW: Look out for the March/April issue of *Gambling Insider's* print magazine, including an interview with American Gaming Association president and CEO Geoff Freeman, as well as a look at how bookmakers are increasingly making use of statistics**



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